



Farm Bureau Safety Program

STORM SAFETY - Summertime brings hot weather, family vacations, and severe thunderstorms. Those thunderstorms do more than change your afternoon plans - they cause a lot of damage. A bolt of lightning can cause injury or death, fire, and destruction of electric-powered equipment. Lightning is electricity, and electricity is always looking for the fastest way to reach the earth. Water, metal, trees, or even people can serve as a conductor to provide that path to ground.

When a thunderstorm threatens, you should get inside. Even though the thunderstorm may not be directly overhead, lightning can strike several miles from the parent cloud. Hilltops, hillsides, and buildings surrounded by flat fields all tend to attract lightning. A wooden rain shelter or stand of trees doesn't provide adequate protection.

If you are caught outside, you should avoid being higher than your surrounding area. In an open area, find a low spot to wait out the storm. Stay away from open water and get off tractors or other open metal vehicles. You should also avoid wire fences, clotheslines, metal pipes, and rails. Do not stand underneath a telephone pole or a tall, isolated tree.

When a person is struck by lightning, they receive a severe electrical shock and may be burned. It is not dangerous to touch them. If someone appears to have been killed by lightning, frequently they can be revived if you act quickly. According to the American Red Cross, you should immediately begin

mouth-to-mouth resuscitation if a victim is not breathing. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is necessary if both a pulse and breathing are absent. A victim should still be given first aid for shock if they appear to be unharmed. Look for burns at fingers and toes, as well as next to jewelry and buckles.

To help prevent lightning damage to buildings, you should prepare ahead of time. Install lightning rods on high points of buildings, especially vents and air-handling units. Another protection device is a ground rod, which should be installed around the perimeter of buildings along with the interconnecting cables. Surge arresters can protect inside wiring and appliances from any lightning-generated surges that travel through power lines.

You should also protect any tree that is within ten feet of a building and taller than the building. A lightning protection system for a tree attaches lightning rods and cables to the branches and tree trunk. The conductor cable is buried at the base of the tree and extends at least twelve feet from the trunk to ground the connections. This system not only protects the tree, but might prevent damage to the building, if the tree should fall. You probably want to get a certified installer to install a lightning protection system for your home and trees, rather than trying to do it yourself.

Check the weather forecast and be prepared when lightning strikes.